



September 30, 1991

**BOYS' AND GIRLS'
CLUBS OF NEWARK, INC.**

**Mr. Steve Ryan
Director of Communications
United Way of Essex and West Hudson
303-309 Washington Street
Newark, New Jersey 07102**

**Chief Executive Officer
Barbara Wright Bell**

Dear Steve:

As I mentioned earlier this morning, both the Mayor's office and Congressman Donald Payne's office have called me expressing their concern and dismay over the portrayal of the City of Newark in the United Way/NFL commercial.

To date, I have not seen the commercial but, as you know, I have asked for a copy which I recognize you are trying to obtain for us. There are several issues of real concern to me surrounding this commercial:

- (1) When United Way presented the opportunity for Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Newark to be in a commercial, we were pleased and excited that United Way selected us. At that time, we were told that you were doing a positive, upbeat, piece. As these are the only type of commercials I've seen United Way do, the thought never crossed my mind that the commercial would cast the city in a negative light. The city, which we feel very much a part of, has been working hard for years to dispel the negative image of Newark which can seriously hamper its economic revitalization. It has made valiant efforts to improve both the quality of life and the image of the city, and clearly, while problems still exist, we deeply believe that one does not have to "tear down to build." The point being, that it is not necessary to cast the city in a negative light to make other organizations bright and shining stars.*
- (2) If what you indicated today is true, that the background pictures are not even Newark, but rather "canned negative scenery", other problems may exist.*
- (3) There seems to be a growing backlash against the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Newark as a result of this commercial, because while not true, it appears that BGCN was involved in the production. I must take responsibility for not requesting to review the script prior to our participation. However, as I indicated, I assumed it would all be very positive, and it never occurred to me that review would have been necessary given United Way's history.*

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"You may support the Boys' & Girls' Clubs through Bequests, Memorials and Special Gifts"

The bottom line is that I believe we're all in this together---intricately connected---and thus, none of us are any greater than the worst or least of us. The Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Newark has worked long and hard to establish a cooperative relationship with the City and shares the city's vision for its future. I am sure that United Way of Essex & West Hudson too shares this same sense of oneness and protectiveness of our city. We must all be vigilant to ensure that other organizations, even our parent organizations i.e. United Way of America, acknowledge and respect our city's goal of building on the city's strengths rather than featuring its deficits.

Where are we? I think we need to do "damage control." Again, I have not seen the commercial but if it's offensive to the Mayor's office and the Congressman's office, I must assume it's offensive. I would therefore ask that the commercial be pulled and/or edited and that necessary apologies be made.

Finally, I know that United Way's intent was not to be damaging to the city and BGCN does appreciate United Way's desire to highlight our programs in a national commercial. Hopefully, the situation can be rectified. Keep me posted. Warm regards.

Sincerely,



Barbara Wright Bell

BWB st

*cc: Dick Lewin, United Way Executive Director
Congressman Donald Payne
Mayor Sharpe James
Jackie Mattison
Pamela Goldstein
Richard Montellh*